

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGENEW YORK TIMES
22 August 1985

U.S. ASSERTS SOVIET IS USING CHEMICAL TO MONITOR ALIENS

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 21 — The United States accused the Soviet Union today of using a mysterious powdery substance as an aid in tracking the movements of Americans and possibly other foreigners in Moscow.

"We have protested the practice in strongest terms and demanded that it be terminated immediately," a State Department spokesman said.

Officials said the United States was more concerned about a possible health risk from the substance than about espionage questions.

Information in U.S. Is Classified

A State Department spokesman, Charles Redman, raised the possibility that the chemical might have the potential to cause cancer. He said one agent, apparently developed by the Russians for tracking purposes, was a mutagen known as nitrophenylpentadienol. A mutagen is a substance that is known to cause genetic change.

The chemical is so little known that it does not appear in standard chemical reference books. Interviews with chemists disclosed that nearly everything known about the substance in the United States was secret. [Page A8.]

In Moscow, the 300 American residents were informed about the situation in unusual briefings at the residence of the United States Ambassador. They were told that the yellowish powder was being used by the K.G.B., the Soviet internal security agency, to keep track of the movements of foreigners. [Page A9.]

U.S. Knew of Powder Since 1976

In Washington, Senator Dave Durenberger, a Minnesota Republican who is chairman of the Intelligence Committee, said the Russians tracked people who came in contact with the powder either by lifting samples off their clothes or by illuminating them with ultraviolet light, making them glow.

He said the United States had known of the powder since 1976 but did not know of its potential health dangers until recently.

"When we had the scientific conclusions in hand," he said, "We had to tell the embassy staff."

Statements by officials left many questions unanswered, including where or how the use of the substance had been discovered, why an alarm was being raised now, and why the use of tracking agents had not been previously examined since the United States Embassy had been aware of them for several years.

Officials said it was "entirely possible" that President Reagan would raise the issue when he meets with Mi-

khail S. Gorbachev in Geneva on Nov. 19-20.

In Santa Barbara, Calif., the White House spokesman, Larry Speakes, said:

"We will certainly discuss, in various forums, the serious dangers to the relationship caused by the actions of the Soviet military and security services, which seem to act as if they were under no control by the political authorities."

He said President Reagan was informed of the situation on Monday and had directed the American response.

The American accusation is the latest in a series of pointed gestures toward the Soviet Union this week. On Monday, the White House said the Soviet Union was hampering arms control talks, and the following day, the United States announced that it would proceed with a test of an anti-satellite weapon against an object in space.

Not Necessarily a Carcinogen

In the State Department, Mr. Redman, in discussing the possibility that the chemical tracking agent could cause cancer, said "mutagens can be, but are not always, carcinogens in human beings."

He added that the United States had no proof that the substance is absorbed into the blood. Extensive testing will be necessary, he said, to determine whether it poses a cancer threat or any other kind of health hazard. He said no one had fallen ill as a result of exposure, which he described as very low.

A special task force under the National Institutes of Health and the Environmental Protection Agency will go to Moscow and conduct an investigation. Mr. Redman said.

Use of Substance Described

An Administration official who declined to be identified said the substance was believed to have been deposited in places that embassy personnel frequently touch, "on your car seat, steering wheel, door knobs, literally anywhere."

"The embassy employee comes in contact with it," he continued. "It is a very persistent agent so that it does not disappear from him wherever he happens to have touched it. He then, in theory, transfers this substance to anything he may come in contact with."

The official would not say how the Russians traced the deposits left by the substances, saying that he could not talk about the "operational aspect."

"We have known of the general use or existence of such sorts of chemical tracking agencies since the 1970's," he said. "Their use, however, was very sporadic, infrequent, to the best that we could determine. In fact, we believed that the Soviets had terminated using such agents, even in these limited

amounts that we had detected, in 1982. We simply did not detect any use between 1982 and the resurgence of more widespread appearances in the spring and summer of this year."

Potential Harm Found in 1984

Last year, a laboratory test known as the Ames Test found that the substance might be harmful, he said, and this spring and summer the United States found evidence that its use was more widespread than previously thought. He said the United States regularly "runs all kinds of tests for various kinds of activities which may be mounted against us."

The United States has found during various periods since 1976 that the Soviet Union has beamed microwave signals at the American Embassy in Moscow. Officials said it was for the purpose of activating bugging devices inside the nine-story building or to interfere with the United States' own surveillance devices on the roof. The last such use of microwaves was reported in late 1983 by Ambassador Arthur A. Hartman.

The official who discussed the tracking substance said a study on microwaves conducted at Johns Hopkins University in the 1970's had concluded that the "level of signals did not present a

health hazard." He said the State Department believed the microwaves were no longer being used.

The official said the United States did not use tracking substances to monitor the movements of foreigners, but he did not rule out the use of nonchemical agents to track criminal activities.

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